

## **PART 268—PRIVACY OF INFORMATION—EMPLOYEE RULES OF CONDUCT**

Sec.

268.1 General principles.

268.2 Consequences of non-compliance.

AUTHORITY: 39 U.S.C. 401; 5 U.S.C. 552a.

### **§ 268.1 General principles.**

In order to conduct its business, the Postal Service has the need to collect various types of personally identifiable information about its customers, employees and other individuals. Information of this nature has been entrusted to the Postal Service, and employees handling it have a legal and ethical obligation to hold it in confidence and to actively protect it from uses other than those compatible with the purpose for which the information was collected. This obligation is legally imposed by the Privacy Act of 1974, which places specific requirements upon all Federal agencies, including the Postal Service, and their employees. In implementation of these requirements, the following rules of conduct apply:

(a) Except as specifically authorized in § 266.4(b)(2) of this chapter, no employee shall disclose, directly or indirectly, the contents of any record about another individual to any person or organization. Managers are to provide guidance in this regard to all employees who must handle such information.

(b) No employee will maintain a secret system of records about individuals. All records systems containing personally identifiable information about individuals must be reported to the Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Officer.

(c) All employees shall adhere strictly to the procedures established by the U.S. Postal Service to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of information about individuals that is collected, maintained and used for official Postal Service business. Employees shall be held responsible for any violation of these procedures.

[45 FR 44273, July 1, 1980, as amended at 60 FR 57346, Nov. 15, 1995]

### **§ 268.2 Consequences of non-compliance.**

(a) The Privacy Act authorizes any individual, whether or not an employee, to bring a civil action in U.S. District Court to obtain judicial review of the failure of the Postal Service to comply with the requirements of the Act or its implementing regulations. In certain instances of willful or intentional non-compliance, the plaintiff may recover damages from the Postal Service in the minimum amount of \$1,000 together with costs of the action and attorney fees.

(b) The Act provides criminal sanctions for individuals, including employees, who violate certain of its provisions.

(1) Any officer or employee who, by virtue of his employment or position, has possession of, or access to, official records which contain individually identifiable information and who, knowing that disclosure of the specific material is prohibited by Postal Service regulations, willfully discloses the material to a person or agency not entitled to receive it, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than \$5,000.

(2) Any officer or employee who willfully maintains a system of records without meeting the notice requirements set forth in Postal Service regulations shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than \$5,000.

(3) Any person who knowingly and willfully requests or obtains any record concerning another individual from the Postal Service under false pretense shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than \$5,000.

(c) In addition to the criminal sanctions, any employee violating any provisions of these rules of conduct is subject to disciplinary action which may result in dismissal from the Postal Service.

[40 FR 45726, Oct. 2, 1975]

## **PART 273—ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM FRAUD CIVIL REMEDIES ACT**

Sec.

273.1 Purpose.